

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2253
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1446

BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EPAP BC
SUBJ: FRANCE CUTS OFF BOTSWANA BEEF IMPORTS

1. AT NORWEGIAN NATIONAL DAY MAY 17, MINAG MASISI APPROACHED DCM, OBVIOUSLY WITH SOMETHING ON HIS MIND. HE OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING, "I WISH THE UNITED STATES WERE ABLE TO IMPORT SOME OF OUR BEEF." HE EXPLAINED THAT JUST THAT AFTERNOON GOB HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT FRANCE WOULD NO LONGER IMPORT BOTSWANA BEEF.

2. MASISI SAID THAT WITH THE CUT-OFF OF FRENCH IMPORTS, BOTSWANA WAS ONLY EXPORTING SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF BEEF TO SOUTH AFRICA. SWITZERLAND, HE SAID, WAS TAKING SMALL QUANTITIES AND THEN OF ONLY POOR CUTS OF BEEF. SOUTH AFRICA WAS TAKING 100 TONS OF BONED BEEF PER WEEK, THE EQUIVALENT OF ONLY ABOUT 1,000 ANIMALS OR LESS THAN 20 PERCENT OF BMC'S PRESENT PRODUCTION. HE SAID THE WEST AFRICAN MARKET, WHICH SO MANY CONSIDERED THE NATURAL MARKET FOR BOTSWANA BEEF, WAS A VERY POOR ONE DUE TO UNCERTAINTY OF DEMAND AND UNRELIABILITY
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OF PAYMENT BY THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED. HE STATED BELIEF THAT WESTERN EUROPE WAS IN FACT THE MOST NATURAL MARKET FOR THE OUTPUT OF FMC. WHEN ASKED ABOUT STORAGE FACILITIES FOR PRESENT PRODUCTION, HE EXPRESSED DISMAY AND SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE IT COULD BE STORED, NOW THAT FRANCE HAD TERMINATED IMPORTS.

3. GOING BACK TO HIS EARLIER REMARK ABOUT U.S. IMPORTING BOTSWANA BEEF, MASISI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR PROBLEMS AND THAT OWING TO THEM AND THE FACT THAT "AMERICA IS A LONG WAY FROM BOTSWANA", HE REALLY DID NOT EXPECT THAT WE COULD HELP THEM OUT BY OPENING U.S. MARKET TO BOTSWANA BEEF. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, HE THOUGHT USG COULD BE OF MORE ASSISTANCE TO BOTSWANA BY PROVIDING ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL AID RATHER THAN BY IMPORTING RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNTS OF BEEF.

4. WE WILL BE TALKING SHORTLY TO GOB ARGICULTURAL ECONOMIST AND WILL SEND FOLLOW-UP REPORT.
NORLAND

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